



LESSON 2

REGIONS AND CULTURE

READ ALOUD

Azeez Narain (uh ZHEEZ nuh RAIN) is an eleven-year-old boy who lives in New Delhi, India. Azeez begins each day with prayers in his family's temple room and then heads to the kitchen for breakfast. Sometimes he eats toast and cereal. More often he eats poha, which is puffed rice with nuts and coconut roasted in butter and spices. Then Azeez rides a bus to school, where he studies 11 subjects six days a week. Four of those subjects are different languages.

Focus Activity

READ TO LEARN

What is daily life like for a boy in India?

VOCABULARY

custom
values
interaction

PLACES

New Delhi

THE BIG PICTURE

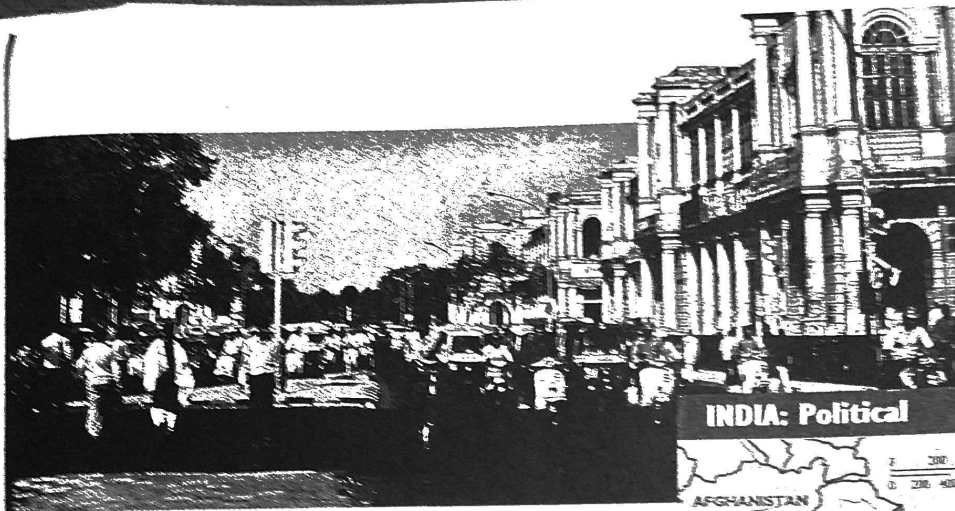
Do parts of Azeez's life sound familiar to you? Some probably do, like eating cereal for breakfast and riding a bus to school. Many such customs are shared by people around the world. Customs are ways of living that people practice regularly over time. Some of Azeez's customs, however, may not be familiar to you. That is because the cultural region of India is very different from that of the United States.

All cultures are made up of many different customs. Those customs determine how we dress, play, eat, learn, live with other people, and understand the world. Customs can reveal a great deal about what we believe is important in life. In fact, every detail of our life says something about the culture in which we live.

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This is a typical street scene in New Delhi, India. How is it similar to an American city?

LIVING IN INDIA

Azeez Narain lives with his parents and six-year-old brother in New Delhi, India. The Narains share many customs with people in other parts of the world. Both parents work, for example. Azeez's mother teaches at a university and his father works as a journalist. Azeez and his friends like to ride their bikes and play computer games.

Many of the Narains' other customs are unique to the culture of India. Before you can understand these customs, however, you need to know a bit about India's past.

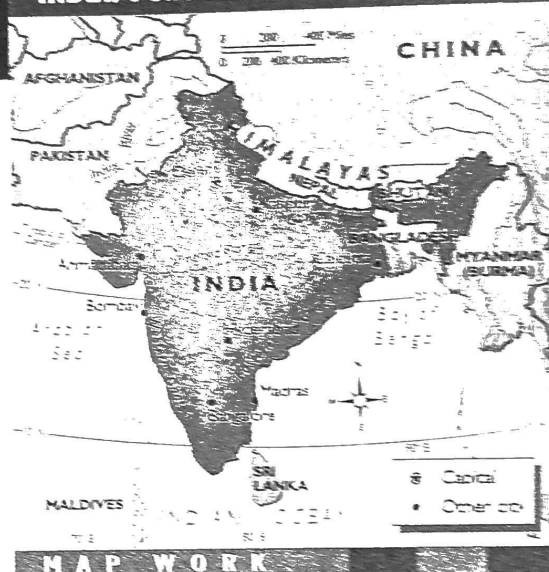
Culture and History

Throughout history people have brought new customs and ideas to India. Thousands of years ago the religion of Hinduism began shaping Indian culture. It remains a very important influence on Indian culture.

About 1,000 years ago Muslims began to settle in India. Muslims are people who follow the religion of Islam. Hinduism and Islam call for different ways of thinking and living. These differences in culture have caused conflicts between these groups in India.

About 250 years ago British traders arrived in India and brought their own customs with them. Britain took over

INDIA: Political



The country of India is located in the southern part of Asia.

1. What bodies of water surround India on three sides?
2. Which countries border India?
3. What is the capital of India?

India's government in 1858 and ruled India for nearly 100 years. Today, some Indians still speak English.

The lives of Azeez and his family reflect the different cultures that are part of India's rich past. The Narains speak both Hindi and English. Azeez loves to play cricket, a game invented in Britain that is a bit like baseball. The Narains are Hindu, as are most Indians. However, the name Azeez is a combination of Muslim and Hindu words that means "community-harmony."

CULTURE HAS MANY PARTS

As you can see, a culture is made up of customs that are passed down through time. Azeez's life shows that the ways we speak, play, and view others can reveal clues about our culture.

Values and Beliefs

One of the most important parts of any culture is its values, or the things people believe are most important in life. Many people's values are shaped by their religious beliefs.

As a Hindu, for example, Azeez believes that all living things have souls and are "a fraction of God." Azeez's parents and grandparents have passed many other Hindu values down to him.

The most important lessons which my grandparents have taught me are that we should live a simple life and that we should not be attracted by money. We should not hurt anyone, including the animals. That's why we are strict vegetarians and don't even eat eggs.

Think about how the values or religious beliefs that you have been taught affect the way you live from day to day.

Culture at Home

You can get many hints about what a culture is like by seeing how people live at home. The Narains live in a six-room apartment. Their living room is filled with books, sofas, a television with 15 channels, and carvings and pictures of Indian leaders and Hindu gods. Mainly traditional Indian food is cooked in the kitchen, including Azeez's favorite dish—*uttapam* (OOT uh pam). Azeez describes this as "a sort of south Indian pizza made of rice with vegetables, coconut, and dried fruit."

A temple room honors the Hindu god Krishna. Each morning and evening Azeez goes there to offer his prayers. On Sundays the Narains travel to the local temple to worship.

Think about how the way you live at home reflects your family's beliefs and customs.

Cultures Change

Cultures do not stay the same forever. They constantly change through their interaction with other cultures. Interaction is the exchange of ideas and customs.

The Narains, for example, do not cook only Indian food. Sometimes they make Chinese or American food as well. Once in a while Azeez plays chess, a game probably invented in India



over 1,000 years ago. The style of chess Azeez plays today, though, was created through interaction between Asian and European cultures.

Another part of Indian culture that has changed is the role of women. Today women in India, especially in cities, have much more freedom and many more rights than in the past. In fact, Indians elected a woman, Indira Gandhi, as head of their government in 1966. Azeez's 11-year-old cousin Kalayani (ka luh YAH nee) says of her future, "I can do anything I want to do."

Azeez at School

Just as home life reveals much about a culture, so does life at school. Azeez attends school six days a week and must wear a uniform. Because so many different languages are spoken in India, Azeez studies four different languages: Hindi, English, Bengali, and Sanskrit, which is an ancient written language. Classes are taught in Hindi and English. Besides languages, Azeez also studies history, geography, math, science, government, and music.

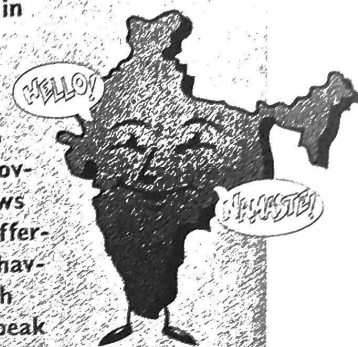


Azeez enjoys playing chess and making music with friends. Here, he is playing the mridanga, a traditional Indian two-headed drum.

DID YOU KNOW?

What language is spoken in India today?

A language called Hindi is the most widely spoken language in India. However, the country's government recognizes 14 other languages in addition to Hindi. That means the government has to print laws and information in 15 different languages! Imagine having to communicate with groups of people who speak different languages. In what ways might that be difficult?



Other Parts of Culture at School

One instrument Azeez plays in music class at school is the *mridanga* (mri DAHNG guh), a two-headed drum used in Indian music. Every day Azeez eats in the school lunchroom with his friends. No meat or egg dishes are served. Instead, the students have spicy vegetables and lentils with rice, and flat breads fried in butter.

Government

New Delhi, where Azeez lives, is the capital of India. India's government is similar to that of the United States. Indians vote for leaders to represent them in government. This form of government, called a representative democracy, is an important part of India's culture. It gives all Indians a say in how they are ruled. When Azeez turns 18, he, too, will be able to vote for the leaders of his government. How old will you have to be to vote in elections in the United States?

Infographic

Cultures Around the World

You have met Azeez Narain in this lesson. Now meet five more young people in this Infographic. What do they have in common? What are some differences in their lives?

Rachel Dennis, age 11
Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada

HOME: Lives in a house on the Atlantic coast with her parents, brother, and dog

LANGUAGE: English

SCHOOL SUBJECTS:

Social studies, science, English, math, art, health, music, physical education

HOBBIES: Gymnastics, horseback riding

FAVORITE FOOD: Waffles



Anna Patricia de Martinez, age 12
Lima, Peru

HOME: Lives in a brick house with her mother, brother, and grandparents

LANGUAGE: Spanish

SCHOOL SUBJECTS: Science, math, Spanish, social studies, English, physical education, music, gardening

HOBBIES: Swimming, volleyball, aerobics

FAVORITE FOOD: Pastelle de Manzanas (pie)



Olanike Olakunri, age 10
Lagos, Nigeria

HOME: Lives in a cinder block house with her parents

LANGUAGES: Yoruba, English

SCHOOL SUBJECTS: Math, English, Citizenship, music

HOBBIES: Board games, mystery books, school running team

FAVORITE FOOD: Eba (a porridge made of cassava flour and dipped in okra)





Brian Lawlor, age 11
County Tipperary, Ireland

HOME: Lives in a farm cottage with his parents and sister

LANGUAGE: English

SCHOOL SUBJECTS: Math, English, geography, music, science, Gaelic studies, physical education

HOBBIES: Hurling (like field hockey), and playing the accordion

FAVORITE FOOD: Apple tart

Harry Tan, age 10
Singapore

HOME: Lives in an apartment with his parents, brother, sister, and dog

LANGUAGE: Mandarin Chinese

SCHOOL SUBJECTS: English, Chinese, social studies, math, science, art, physical education

HOBBIES: Video games, skateboarding, baseball

FAVORITE FOOD: Rice with chicken in curry gravy

WHY IT MATTERS

Whenever and wherever people have lived, their lives have been shaped by the culture around them. A culture's language, government, values, foods, and entertainment make people who they are. Cultures also change as they interact with others over time.

This process of interaction is a big part of the story you will read in this book. In the chapters to come you will read about the world's many different cultures. Interaction between these cultures over the years has created the fascinating and complex world that we live in today.

Reviewing Facts and Ideas

SUM IT UP

- All cultures are made up of similar parts, such as religion, government, and education.
- Values affect not only what people believe, but also how they live.
- Cultures change as people of different cultures interact with one another.

THINK ABOUT IT

1. What are some clues you can study to learn about a culture?
2. How has religion shaped life for people in India?
3. **FOCUS** What has Azeez Narain's life taught you about the many parts of Indian culture?
4. **THINKING SKILL** What are two generalizations that you could make about Azeez's family?
5. **WRITE** Write an article for visitors from other countries. Describe how culture in the United States has been shaped by interaction with other cultures.